

# Introduction

*Created in 1990, PIRT Review Panel continues to protect citizens against pesticide exposure through the understanding of incident causes and by developing prevention strategies.*

The Pesticide Incident Reporting and Tracking (PIRT) Review Panel was created by RCW 70.104.090 to monitor pesticide-related incidents that have suspected health or environmental effects. The Panel consists of representatives of Washington State Departments of Agriculture, Ecology, Health, Labor and Industries, Natural Resources, and Fish and Wildlife, representatives of the University of Washington, Washington State University, and Washington Poison Center, a practicing toxicologist, and a member of the public (Appendix A).

Member agencies conduct pesticide incident investigations in accordance with their specific statutory responsibilities and report findings to the Panel for evaluation. The Panel is mandated to perform the following activities:

- Centralize the receipt of information regarding pesticide complaints and their investigations and monitor timeliness of agencies' response to complainants.
- Review and make recommendations for procedures for investigation of pesticide incidents.
- Identify inadequacies of pesticide regulations to protect public health.
- Submit an annual report summarizing pesticide incidents to the legislature.

The Panel has no regulatory authority but acts in an oversight capacity to the six agencies and makes recommendations to the agencies, to the legislature, and to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

This 2005 report is the Panel's fifteenth annual report. It summarizes pesticide-related incident reports, complaints or calls to WSDA, DOH, Ecology, L&I, and WPC. The report:

- Provides analyses of each agency's incidents and follow-up activities for 2004.
- Describes Panel and member agency activities for 2005.
- Describes how pesticide-related calls, complaints, incidents, and investigations overlap between agencies.

### Combined Agency Data

The number of incidents reported to agencies and calls made to WPC for the years 2000 – 2004 are listed in Table 3. There is not a consistent increase or decrease in the number of reported pesticide-related incidents across agencies. WSDA complaints were elevated in 2002, but are back to earlier levels in 2004. DOH cases have leveled out after a spike in 2000. In 2004, the number of L&I pesticide-related claims dropped to the low level seen in 2002 while the number of pesticide-related calls to WPC increased by 21% from 2003 to 2004.

**Table 3. Pesticide Incidents Reported to Agencies and WPC, 2000 - 2004**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
WSDA Complaints	199	225	255	222	200
Ecology Complaints	63	35	46	33	29
DOH Incidents	302	200	216	242	245
DOH Cases	388	250	270	275	269
WISHA Inspections	34	27	64	22	43
L&I Claims	180	129	109	133	101
WPC Calls	2326	2171	2043	1937	2342

### Overlap of Pesticide-related Events by Agency

Each agency's responsibility for responding to reports of pesticide-related incidents is outlined as follows:

- WSDA investigates complaints about misuse or misapplication, licensing, and structural inspections. WSDA enforces the language on pesticide labels and coordinates with L&I WISHA to enforce the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) for agricultural workers.
- Ecology investigates and enforces remediation of incidents involving spills or environmental contamination by pesticides.
- DOH investigates reported cases of suspected pesticide-related illness.
- L&I WISHA conducts safety and health workplace inspections in agriculture/industry and investigates employee complaints and referrals from agencies and others. WISHA enforces the WPS for agricultural workers with WSDA and other workplace safety rules.
- L&I Claims Insurance Services Division adjudicates and administers worker compensation insurance claims related to pesticide exposures.
- WPC provides information and medical advice to the public and to health care providers who call about pesticides.

Pesticide-related cases are referred between PIRT agencies when appropriate. For instance, if a WSDA investigation into a pesticide label violation finds a worker who was ill, the case is referred to DOH. If a DOH investigation finds a

label or safety violation, it is referred to WSDA or L&I WISHA. L&I claims related to pesticide-exposure are reported to DOH. These referrals result in overlapping agency data for cases involving pesticide-related illness.

As the state agency responsible for investigating cases of pesticide-related illness, DOH has formal arrangements with L&I, WSDA, and WPC to receive reports of suspected pesticide-related illnesses and injuries. With these arrangements, DOH data are the most reflective of human pesticide-related illness in the state.

### Aggregation of PIRT Data

The overlap in pesticide-related cases between agencies for 2004 is illustrated in Table 4 and Figure 1. The shaded cells in Table 4 show the total number of incidents reported to PIRT by each agency. The white cells indicate the numbers of incidents reported by multiple agencies. Where two numbers appear in the cells, the first number represents the number of events and the second number represents the number of people involved. For example, WSDA responded to 200 complaints about incidents involving a pesticide application. Sixteen of these incidents involved 30 human illnesses and were co-investigated by DOH, 2 were investigated by the Ecology Spill Response Program, 1 involved a worker who filed an L&I claim and 1 involved a call to WPC.

It is difficult to aggregate PIRT data because each agency collects a different type of data. For example, Ecology Spills Program data include information on actual environmental contamination and on calls from concerned neighbors about pesticide use that turned out to be legal after investigation. Data from WPC includes calls about human exposures with and without associated illness. WSDA data include actual violations, cases of crop damage, complaints about inadequate pest control inspections, and problems with licensing of pesticide applicators.

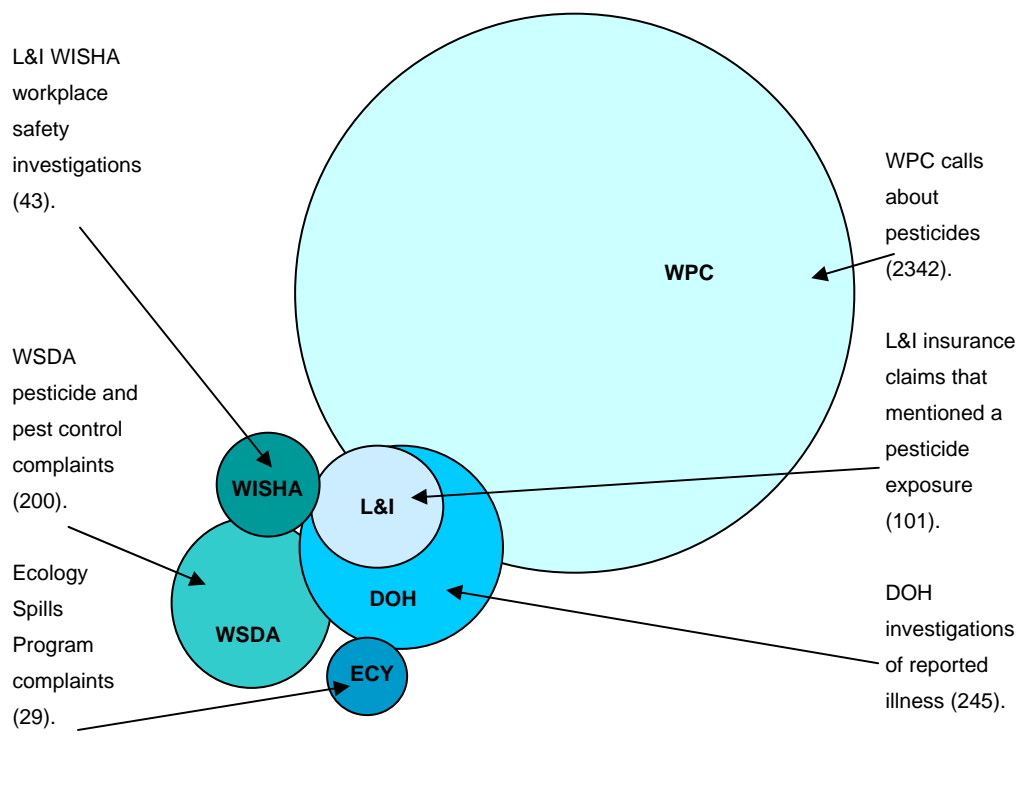
**Table 4. Overlap of Pesticide-Related Events\* by Agency, 2004**

	WSDA	Ecology	DOH	L&I	WISHA	WPC
WSDA	200	2	16/30	1	2	1
Ecology	2	29	2/9	1	-	-
DOH	16/30	2/9	245/269	101	2	150
L&I Claims	1	1	101	101	1	21
WISHA	2	-	2	1	43	-
WPC	1	-	150	21	-	2342

\* Events include WSDA complaints by event, Ecology complaints by event, DOH incidents by people involved, L&I claims by people involved, L&I WISHA inspections by employer, and WPC calls by people involved. Where two numbers appear, the first number represents events and the second number represents people involved.

Figure 1 illustrates how the PIRT agency datasets overlap for 2004. The figure is not drawn to scale. The WPC circle is very large as it indicates the number of calls concerning pesticides, not the number of actual human exposures.

**Figure 1. Overlap of PIRT Member Agencies Pesticide Related Events, 2004**



### Strengths and Limitations of PIRT Data

The strengths and limitations of PIRT data were discussed in depth in the *2004 Annual Report* (pages 21-26). The limitations of state comparisons of pesticide-related illnesses are also discussed in the *2004 Annual Report*. The *2004 Annual Report* is available on the PIRT Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/PIRT/pubs-pirt.htm>.

### PIRT Report to Senate Agriculture Committee

Panel members presented information on PIRT activities and current pesticide issues to the Senate Agriculture Committee on January 27, 2005.

## Agency Response Times

Revised Code of Washington 70.104.080 (Appendix A) specifically directs the PIRT Review Panel to monitor agency response time to pesticide-related incidents for the departments of Agriculture, Health, and Labor and Industries. Response time is defined as the interval between initial report of an incident and an agency's first response to the report. The first response may be a phone call, a request for medical or spray records or other agency action. Agency response times for 2004 are listed in Table 5.

**Table 5. Agency Response Times, 2004**

Agency Mandates	Agency Response Times
<b>Agriculture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Immediate response when complaints involve humans or animals</li><li>• All other complaint investigations must be initiated within 48 hours</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100% of human exposure cases within 24 hours</li><li>• 79% of all cases within 24 hours</li></ul>
<b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospital admission, death, or threat to public health within 24 hours</li><li>• All others within 48 hours</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All 4 severe reports within 24 hours</li><li>• 94% within 48 hours</li></ul>
<b>Labor and Industries (WISHA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Serious complaints within 30 days</li><li>• All others within 120 days</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Majority within 30 days</li><li>• All within 120 days</li></ul>

